

City of Northampton, MA
Transportation and Parking Commission

August 15, 2023

MEETING MINUTES

Submitted by: Beth A. Kaplowitt

1. DPW Director Donna LaScaleia called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. and announced that there would be audio/video recording of this virtual meeting.

Members present and absent/introductions:

Member	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Donna LaScaleia, DPW Director, Chair	X	
Jody Kasper, Chief of Police, Vice Chair	X	
Carolyn Misch, Director of Planning and Sustainability	Absent	
Nanci Forrestall, Parking Enforcement Administrator	X	
Jamila Gore, City Councilor At Large	X	
Karen Foster, Ward 2 City Councilor	X	
Adam Novitt, Citizen	Absent	
Jami Albro-Fisher, Citizen	Absent	
Diana Day, Citizen	Absent	
Debin Bruce, Citizen	X	
Advisor	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Maggie Chan, DPW Traffic Engineer	X	
Staff	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Cyndi Quinn, DPW Administration Manager	X	
Beth A. Kaplowitt, Principal Account Clerk	X	

2. **Public comment**

- The following residents expressed their opinions - both positive and negative - about the downtown redesign project:
 - ❖ Benjamin Spencer of Rust Avenue in Northampton
 - ❖ John DiBartolo
 - ❖ James Winston of Northampton
 - ❖ Jackie Balance of Florence
 - ❖ Claudia Lefko
 - ❖ Marc Warner of Northampton
- Kim Lambert of Pines Edge Drive in Northampton said that these meetings don't allow for any real conversations. She would also like to see some traffic calming measures put into place at the intersection of Cooke Avenue and Hatfield Street.

3. **Approval of minutes from previous meeting (s): June 20, 2023**

- A motion was proposed and seconded;
- A roll call vote was taken. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To approve the minutes from the June 20, 2023 meeting.	Debin Bruce	Jody Kasper	Yes, 5 No, 0 Abstain, 1

4. Reports from departments and subcommittees/announcements/presentations

- Department of Public Works (DPW) – Director Donna LaScaleia
 - Winter Street - Final paving of the road, driveways and sidewalks is anticipated to begin in a few weeks;
 - Safe Routes to School - MassDOT has contracted with Gomes Construction Company, Inc. to complete improvements that will enhance pedestrian safety near Bridge Street School. The project is substantially complete;
 - Damon Road project – The contractor, Gagliarducci Construction, Inc., will be working on driveways and catch basin frames between Damon Place and the Norwottuck Rail Trail. Motorists should expect delays;
 - The City received two sets of school zone flashing beacons as part of a MassDOT grant. For the Northampton High School, the beacons will be installed by 74 North Elm Street and 333 Elm Street. For Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, the beacons will be installed by 15 Locust Street and 80 Locust Street. The installation is anticipated to occur in the upcoming weeks.

5. Matters before the Commission

- a) Discussion of Traffic Calming Request (TCR) for Riverside Drive
 - There have been a number of TCRs submitted for several locations on Riverside Drive;
 - The primary concerns were about speeding and heavy traffic volumes;
 - The Police Department (PD) collected speed and collision data and the Department of Public Works (DPW) did an engineering analysis;
 - The PD broke their analysis into different segments. The 5 year look-back period started on 6/27/23. There were no collisions in the area of Maines Field. There was one collision on Ladd Avenue at the intersection with Riverside Drive. There were 5 collisions on Federal Street (one in 2018 and four in 2019). All of the collisions involved drivers who stopped on Federal Street and then pulled out in front of vehicles travelling on Riverside Drive;
 - The PD also collected speed data on two different sections by Maines Field. From 7/21 – 8/4/22, data was collected near 579 Riverside Drive on 10,697 vehicles. They went an average speed of 29 mph (posted speed was 30 mph) and the 85th percentile was 34.7, so this is an area of concern regarding speeding. Near 294 Riverside Drive from 5/19 – 6/22/23 the average speed of 17,287 vehicles was 26 mph and the 85th percentile was 30.3 in this area where the posted speed limit is 20 mph, so again there is a significant speeding problem here;
 - The following members of the public commented on this topic:
 - ❖ Joyce Rosenfeld of Warner Street
 - ❖ Henry Morgan, whose house faces Riverside Drive and Federal Street

- ❖ Alex Jarrett, Ward 5 Councilor who lives on High Street spoke for Christine Shaw & Justin Wentworth of 238 Riverside Drive who were unable to attend this meeting
 - ❖ Celeste Palladino of 29 Landy Avenue
 - ❖ Summer Cable of Riverside Drive
 - ❖ Kristen Ruben of 291 Riverside Drive
 - ❖ Jackie Ballance of Baystate Village
 - Director LaScaleia said that there are speed tables at 167 and 221 Riverside Drive. These can affect drainage so the DPW must be careful. Speed tables can be very effective but the speed tables make noise when heavy vehicles go over them, and this can annoy abutters to the roadway. She has spoken with Councilor Jarrett about the Ladd Avenue intersection. They would like to improve pedestrian safety there, and will continue to be in touch.
- b) Discussion of Traffic Calming Request for Bridge Road by Shallowbrook Lane
- Director LaScaleia said that this TCR came to us regarding turning safely into the Lathrop community at Bridge Road. The CEO of Lathrop requested that this be looked into. Chris Hague, the Facilities Director at Lathrop said that the biggest problem is flagging concern for speed enforcement there;
 - Chief Kasper said that the PD did a 5 year look-back period which started on 7/25/23 and included collisions between Hatfield Street and North Elm Street. There were 17 collisions at that intersection, and 7 collisions at the intersection of Bridge Street and North Elm Street. They collected speed data on 112,817 vehicles which went an average speed of 37 mph in this 35 mph speed limit area. The 85th percentile was 40.97, so this is definitely an area of concern regarding speeding.
- c) Discussion of Traffic Calming Request for Audubon Road
- Chief Kasper said that the PD did a 5 year collision look-back period which started on 7/26/22 and included three collisions in 2017. One of these was a speeding driver who became distracted and veered off the road into a utility pole. In 2021 there were two collisions. One was a single vehicle that veered off the roadway and hit a tree. The other driver experienced a medical emergency and veered off the roadway;
 - The PD collected speed data at 346 Audubon Road from 9/14/22 – 9/30/22 on 9,817 vehicles which went an average speed of 29 mph in this 30 mph speed zone. The 85th percentile was 34.1, so this is definitely an area of concern regarding speeding;
 - When the PD identifies an area with a speeding problem they try to set up a covert data collection operation and add the area to the list for a directed patrol during which they issue citations as appropriate;
 - Director LaScaleia said that Audubon Road is over 7,000' long, but it is only 22 - 23' wide, which is very narrow. The DPW must work within this narrow footprint.
- d) Discussion of Traffic Calming Request for Prospect Street at Crescent Street
- Chief Kasper said that the PD did a 5 year collision look-back period of Crescent Street, Summer Street and Prospect Street which started on 8/3/22. There were no collisions in 2018, one in 2019, one in 2020, two in 2021 and one in 2022 for a total of 5 in 5 years. Only one of those resulted in personal injury. Two involved a driver on Crescent Street who failed to stop at a stop sign and then collided with a car on Summer Street. The

others were single vehicle crashes where impaired drivers left the roadway and collided with a fixed object;

- The PD collected speed data in the vicinity of 200 Prospect Street in October 2022 on 73,162 vehicles. They went an average speed of 34 mph in this 35 mph speed zone. The 85th percentile was 37.8;
- Director LaScaleia said that the DPW refers to the Prospect Street area as a corridor. Like Audubon Road, Prospect Street is over 7,000' long, but unlike Audubon Road, the pavement ranges from 25 – 40' wide, which gives a little bit more flexibility in terms of what can be employed here to tighten up and make the roadway a little bit safer for everybody;
- Councilor Gore said that she has noticed that many drivers going from Summer Street to Crescent Street stop briefly or not at all at the stop signs.

e) Discussion of Traffic Calming Request for the Village Hill Neighborhood

- Multiple TCRs were received last summer;
- Chief Kasper said that the PD did a 5 year collision look-back period from 8/12/22 and found that there were no collisions;
- The PD collected speed data from 10/20 – 11/5/22 on about 9,500 vehicles. They went an average speed of 21mph and the 85th percentile was 25.4;
- The DPW did a very extensive and expensive stop sign analysis in this area. They worked with Councilor Foster. This study resulted in several Ordinance changes that went through City Council. The area is tricky because it is a closed circuit, not a cut-through;
- Members of the public Marlynn of Village Hill Road and Nicholas Warren of Olander Drive commented;
- Councilor Foster said that two years ago the stop sign situation was looked at. The neighborhood put up “Please Slow Down” signs. Since then the Village Hill neighborhood has grown and there are more vehicles and drivers may be more confused.

f) Discussion of Parking Request for Main Street, Florence

- This is the area outside Cooper’s Corner. Director LaScaleia said that the focus is on improving sightlines for drivers going in and out of parking lots and restricting parking adjacent to driveways and generally opening up the area;
- Ward 5 Councilor Alex Jarrett said that one issue is that drivers are going too fast on Route 9. He thinks that some Traffic Calming measures could help to slow people down;
- Mike Natale, the owner of State Street Fruit Store and Cooper’s Corner is concerned about safety for all of his customers and other pedestrians. He also said that removing the parking space on Route 9 closest to his parking lot won’t alleviate the problem and in fact could be detrimental to his business. He would prefer to see it made into a 15 minute space;
- Debin Bruce suggested looking at this problem in a more comprehensive way;
- Director LaScaleia said that this is a corridor issue involving congestion, speed and turning issues. She said that they will be doing a trial run with temporary “No Parking” signs;
- Members of the public Jackie Ballance and Claudia Lefko also commented.

6. New Business

- None.

7. Adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

- A motion was proposed and seconded and a roll call vote was taken. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
Adjourn.	Karen Foster	Nanci Forrestall	Yes, 6 No, 0 Abstain, 0